

fine capacity for friendship. There was more in his heart than could be expressed in his jaunty and flippant words about death. He could not hold that pose to the end. But neither could he make the most and the best of even such shadowy faith and such vague humanistic religiousness as he had. Even one who does not accept the "dogma" of resurrection and is not convinced by the arguments for immortality may recognize the beauty and the worth of life and the sweet solemnity of death. Such a one, approaching what seems to him the end of his personal existence, may wrap the drapery of his couch about him and lie down to pleasant dreams, even if he is not "soothed and sustained by an unfaltering trust." But to die in a cackle of forced and scornful laughter is a sad death.

## Obliteration Bombing

THE TWENTY-EGHT PACIFISTS who called Vera Brittain's pamphlet, "Massacre by Bombing," to the attention of the American public have already accomplished one of their main purposes. In their foreword these leaders—most of them Christian clergymen—called for national repentance because "we have not acquainted ourselves with the verities and realities of what is being done in our name in Europe." Now what they issued as a supplement to *Fellowship*, the monthly magazine of the Fellowship of Reconciliation with its limited circulation, has become a subject for discussion in the press from coast to coast. The more vigorous the debate, the more will the purposes of Miss Brittain and her supporters be served.

Probably few of our readers now need to be told that Miss Brittain's 16-page pamphlet consists principally of a description of what has happened to eighteen German cities and large towns since the inauguration of Allied mass bombing.\* In this way she supplies documentation to support the protest against obliteration bombing made in the House of Lords by the Bishop of Chichester and the former Archbishop of Canterbury. For her reports Miss Brittain draws almost entirely on the press of England, the United States, Sweden and Switzerland, together with statements by Prime Minister Churchill, other members of the British government and high-ranking officers of the Allied airforce. Such reports as she quotes deal with the destruction caused *before* the present policy of "obliteration bombing" began. In the light of the devastation caused by these earlier air raids, one's mind can scarcely conceive what the horror created by today's obliteration raids must be.

Among the sponsors of the Brittain pamphlet are George A. Buttrick, Allan Knight Chalmers, Henry H. Crane, Albert E. Day, Phillips P. Elliott, Harry Emerson Fosdick, E. Stanley Jones, Rufus Jones, Kenneth Scott Latourette, W. Appleton Lawrence, Elmore M. McKee,

\*Copies of "Massacre by Bombing" can be obtained from the Fellowship of Reconciliation, 2929 Broadway, New York, N. Y., for 10 cents each.

Walter Mitchell, Edwin McNeill Poteat, Richard Roberts, Paul Scherer, Ralph Sockman, Ernest F. Tittle, Oswald Garrison Villard and Winifred Wygal. Whatever one may think of their conclusions, these are not names to be lightly dismissed. Nor has the press—with a few unimportant exceptions—treated them lightly. Discussion of the protest against obliteration bombing, although generally unfavorable, has acknowledged the high motives as well as the high standing of the protest-makers. Prominent among the clergymen who have publicly taken the other side have been Dr. Daniel A. Poling and the leader of the Methodist Bishops' Crusade, Bishop G. Bromley Oxnam.

In the main, comment on the Brittain pamphlet has followed the lines that might have been anticipated. Such a specialist on German affairs as William L. Shirer questioned the accuracy of the statistics quoted by Miss Brittain; he especially directed suspicion against the figure of 1,200,086 civilians killed before last October 1 as a product of Dr. Göbbels' propaganda office. Others questioned the legitimacy of any act or utterance by American and British citizens at this time which might give the Germans reason to hope that the Allies would ease their blows short of complete victory. More thoughtful Americans questioned whether the "repentance" called for by Miss Brittain's endorsers was not being sought for the wrong thing. Is it not responsibility for permitting the war to occur, rather than for the nature of the war, for which repentance is needed? NY

With this last point of view The Christian Century finds itself in complete accord. As has been said many times in these pages, it is war that is the atrocity, and there is no reason to expect that its barbarous nature can be held in check. The responsibility of the Christian is to oppose war by opposing and helping to cure the conditions that breed it, and it is too late to discharge that responsibility in relation to a given war after hostilities have started. Nevertheless, Miss Brittain has given expression to a growing feeling of revulsion and misgiving which is gnawing at many minds. The very passion with which some have denounced her pamphlet is in itself evidence of the inner tension which many feel. Admitting that the insane logic of war requires that all things be done which are necessary to win victory, yet millions of Christians find themselves tormented with the question: Is such horror as this indiscriminate slaughter of civilians necessary? When Mr. Churchill says, "There are no lengths in violence to which we will not go," such Christians cry out from the depths of their shaken souls, "Not any?"

Obliteration bombing is only one more development in the science of destruction to prove once more the demonic nature of war. Obliteration bombing is not an atrocity; it is only a part of an atrocity, which is war. But because it is the latest in the hellish brood of war's weapons it has a shocking effect today which older methods of mass killing—submarine attacks, starvation blockades, even poison gas—no longer possess. "Obliteration bombing" means just that—the effort to obliterate whole cities, or whole sections of cities, if necessary with every living creature in them, and so to lay waste the entire area that no further work can be carried on by any survivors who may have



escaped immediate death. Even such bombing as went on before the obliteration tactics were adopted resulted in horrors such as these, as Miss Brittain quotes them:

In the ruins of Hamburg, Düsseldorf and Cologne "civilized life . . . is no longer possible." . . . In roughly comparable U. S. terms, similar air attacks would have devastated three-quarters of Los Angeles, Cleveland, Baltimore, Boston, New Orleans, Minneapolis, Cincinnati, Newark, Louisville, St. Paul. "Civilized life" would no longer be possible in Detroit, Pittsburgh, Buffalo. (*Time*, December 20, 1943.)

It was nerve-shattering to see women, demented after the raids, crying continuously for their lost children, or wandering speechless through the streets with their dead babies in their arms. In the Alexanderplatz station there was a fight among women struggling with one another for seats in a train, aboard which some of their children were, as the train showed signs of steaming off. (*London Daily Telegraph*, September 20, 1943, reporting from Switzerland on effect of August and September raids on Berlin.)

Raids on the scale of Friday night's attack on Düsseldorf mean the virtual blotting out of the city as far as ordinary residential life is concerned. (*London Sunday Times*, June 13, 1943.)

Hardly anyone, it is alleged, escaped in the heavily populated area of many miles on which the Allies planted a carpet of hundreds of thousands of explosives and incendiaries. . . . At least 20,000 perished in shelters alone. (*London Daily Mail*, October 9, 1943, reporting raid on Hamburg.)

To all intents and purposes a city of 1,800,000 inhabitants lies in absolute ruins. . . . It is probably the most complete blotting-out of a city that ever happened. (R.A.F. commentator on Hamburg raids.)

Everywhere were charred corpses, and injured people had been left unattended. We will remember those Hamburg streets as long as we live. Charred adult corpses had shrunk to the size of children. Women were wandering about half-crazy. That night, the largest workers' district of the city was wiped out. (*London Reynold's News*, quoting the Swiss *National-Zeitung*, August 9, 1943.)

When you drive through Hamburg you drive through corpses. They are all over the streets, and even in treetops. (*Stockholm Aftonbladet*.)

People went mad in the shelters. They screamed and threw themselves, biting and clawing the doors which were locked against them by the wardens. (*London Daily Telegraph*, August 25, 1943.)

The condition of the cellar shelters, which have meanwhile been opened, give some indication of the temperature which must have prevailed in the streets. The people who remained in these rooms were not only suffocated and charred but reduced to ashes. In other words, these rooms which, without exception, became death-chambers for dozens and hundreds of people, must have reached a temperature such as is not reached in the burning chambers of a crematorium. . . . Obviously, it is impossible to identify the bodies, as all the belongings of the people have also been reduced to ashes. (*Swiss Baseler Nachrichten*, September 9, 1943.)

Miss Brittain's pamphlet quotes pages and pages of this sort of horror—all of it, bear in mind, reported before obliteration bombing began. The justification which defenders of the bombing offensive offer is, of course, that military necessity requires it, and that it will hasten victory and so, in the war's final balancing of accounts, save American and British lives. Since there can be no other conceivable justification for inflicting such agonies on

civilians, both these arguments require careful consideration.

It must be said at once that no observer outside the military high command can, while war continues, successfully deny any commander's claim as to what is required by military necessity. In the nature of the case, military judgment holds sway in such instances. But that is not to say that such judgment is infallible nor that, in the light of history, it may not be found to have involved the nation in acts which will besmirch the national reputation for generations. Was the judgment infallible of the German high command which held the policy of *Schrecklichkeit* a military necessity in the First World War? Even now, in view of the results, it may be questioned whether the destruction of the abbey on Mount Cassino was as much of a military necessity as the commanders of the Allied forces led the world to believe.

The pope has posed a problem for military infallibility by his denial, in his speech of March 12, of any necessity for the bombing of Rome. In the midst of the fighting the pope's protest will not override the generals' judgment. If the generals say that success in the Italian campaign requires that Rome shall be bombed, Rome will be bombed. But the pope's protest will be on record, an appeal to the court of history which will bring in its verdict after the fighting is all over. Reversals in that court will not bring the dead back to life, but they may help to instruct the war's survivors in the monstrous folly which nations commit when they entrust themselves to a war in which they must perforce accept the judgment of generals.

But if it is impossible successfully at this juncture to go behind the army's verdict as to what constitutes military necessity, there is at least one moral requirement implicit in such necessity which as yet the Allies have not met. As Anne O'Hare McCormick, the foreign affairs editor of the *New York Times*, points out, there can be no justification for this sort of warfare against whole populations unless at the same time every other means of shortening the war is being tried. And in this case that means offering the German people a means of ending the war, of making a just and lasting peace, which shall not require this indiscriminate destruction. Yet there is no evidence that any such alternative is being offered to the German people. "So far," as Mrs. McCormick says, "neither Mr. Churchill nor Mr. Roosevelt has said anything to counter the German propaganda that the peace will be worse than the war." Failure to open to the German masses a way of escape from this holocaust leaves the Allies in a morally indefensible position.

As to the other justification widely urged in behalf of obliteration bombing—the claim that it will hasten victory—this again is a matter on which, for the moment, the judgment of the military authorities cannot be successfully challenged. But the question which Miss Brittain's pamphlet raises in the mind of every thoughtful reader is as to whether victory won in this fashion will be worth having. Or will the fabric of society, the mechanisms of civilization be so shattered and pulverized that, when "victory" has been won, it will turn out to be victory in a desert or in a madhouse? In this connection one



ponder the words of that thoughtful Dutch Christian leader, Visser t' Hooft, secretary of the World Council of Churches, as Miss Brittain quotes them:

Total war means that the outward conditions of life become such that most of the last remaining strongholds of free, healthy life, which exist of their own right and not merely as a product of the will of the state, are also destroyed. . . . It must be added that the wholesale bombardments which involve the complete blotting out of whole cities have the same effect. Men and women who had still a home and a job to defend, have suddenly become people who have nothing to lose and are thus thrown into the mass of uprooted creatures who are merely the passive playthings of forces which they do not comprehend. At the same time these bombardments create the impression that the whole world has gone totalitarian. It is believed that no country recognizes any longer the limits of consideration for human life and of moral standards. It seems that there is nothing left except the war of all against all.

It is no reply to this misgiving with regard to the future to say that the choice is between razing fifty German cities to the ground, with whatever cost of human agony that may entail, and having American and British homes ground under the Nazi tyranny. Whether or not that frightful dilemma may once have existed, it exists no longer. And if the war goes on, with obliteration bombing continuing to wipe out whole regions and populations, it is quite possible that in the hour of triumph the victors will find that they have created so much destruction, so much hate, so much misery, so much despair that the very well-springs of Occidental life have been poisoned not only for the vanquished but for the victors also.

## Quid Pro Quo

EDITOR THE CHRISTIAN CENTURY:

SIR: I remember reading many years ago an article in which the writer suggested a method of simplifying our complicated financial relationships. It was not that he wished to do away with the "cash nexus," as certain of my friends aspired to do when they founded a religious society "free from creeds and the cash nexus." It was of far more practical things he was thinking.

Consider the payment of your grocer's accounts, or the little bill due to the alluring bookstores, and let it be granted that you are a man who earns his living from writing books—poetry, history, fiction and the like, or even weekly articles by "Aunt Jane." Between your receiving and paying there are interposed many intermediary stages.

But must they be? Why not short-circuit the elaborate ways in the transaction between you and your obliging merchants? You receive a leg of mutton; you send a note in answer enclosing a sonnet of yours. Perhaps the merchant might say, "This is too kind altogether! My material contribution to the table is not worth so noble a spiritual gift!" Or perhaps he will store it away in his scrapbook, and years afterwards he and his heirs will sell a hitherto unpublished sonnet by "the famous, etc., journalist and theologian, etc." and the heirs aforesaid will at last realize a fabulous price.

There would be, as you will admit, not only an element of humanity introduced into the cold relations between seller and buyer, but a romantic adventure would brighten the days of that diligent man who, as they would say in the pulpit, "ministers to your temporal necessities."

"But," you observe, "Quintus, will you ever rise above your romantic clouds into the cloudless skies of Things as They Are? What would that merchant do if my sonnet proved to have great merit, of course, but little commercial value? Would another leg of mutton follow on the old trustful terms?"

Or again, as you say, being now roused to a hand-to-hand encounter in argument, "Really, Quintus, the one result of your supposed simplifying of our financial dealings would be the creation of a new profession. There would rise middlemen, to whom merchants of all kinds would pass on the poems, sketches, novels (one on some long and neglected account many times rendered), even sermons. From these exchanges they would go forth to publishers, editors and such like, and perhaps you as editor might be offered your sonnet for use in your paper."

Without doubt there are difficulties. But what are difficulties, as you once explained, but challenges to be met and overcome?

Perhaps the time is not yet come for this new method. There must first be more friendly relations between us, merchants and buyers and all. We must know each other's varied tastes. You might even come to a happier time when you could call on your drugstore and tell your friend, the manager, "I have a little thing I know you will like upon the Monophysites. What are you prepared to offer me?" He might thereupon respond with an offer of two bottles of Syrup of Senurp which, spelled backwards, is just the thing needed by you as another of us in the goodly company of the "over 35."

In a community which should not be too large, there is something attractive and even practical in barter. I admit that among those barbarous hosts "barricaded in our cities" there is little to be done in this way. And the disciples of Mammon do not like the thought of barter. It shows them up!

Ever yours,  
QUINTUS QUIZ.

## After Snowfall

THE wise man said that no two flakes disclose—

In all this multi-myriad feather-fall—  
The same design. Airy and formless all  
Rode on the wisps of aching cold and froze  
Each its immutable device. Suppose  
That careless patterning or mood jocose  
Should once or twice defy exactitude  
And let an adventitious twin intrude!  
But frost and snowdrift prove it is not  
With Him who shapes the diaphanous  
The infinite variety of die  
That stamps the icy particles of snow  
Attests the surety of the intent  
That all He touches must be different.

EDWIN MCGILL

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